



Commission gave its design preference for the park, which mirrored previous comments from resident forums and advisory boards.

A final design is expected to return for approval by the elected officials on Sept. 6.

Features in that final design will include a water-splash play area, shaded playground, concessions, restrooms, pavilions and parking.

Through public forums, meetings with advisory boards and discussions with the City Commission, a lot of people have had a chance to voice their opinion on the design of the park.

"None of us are architects, although we play one sometimes," Mayor Ed Kelley quipped.

Architects from Zev Cohen and Associates had distilled previous comments into two basic design concepts for the park.

On Aug. 3, it was the City Commission's turn to pick from the two options, Plan A or Plan B.

"More parking, more open park area, more benches, more seating, more restoration of dunes, more covered porches - it's a no brainer, Plan B," Commissioner Rick Boehm said.

Plan B offers 187 parking spaces compared to 158 in Plan A. Also, Plan B kept 1.8 acres of open space versus 1.4 acres in plan A.

A slightly higher potential price tag, \$2.5 million, goes with Plan B, as opposed to \$2.4 million for Plan A.

More and larger pavilions, more picnic tables, more barbecue grills and more benches were proposed in Plan B.

Comments in resident forums and from city advisory boards also slightly favored Plan B, although both plans had some support.

Elected officials did choose an architectural feature from Plan A. The commissioners preferred construction of the restroom-concession building to mimic the city's historic beachside coquina fire hall rather than look like a lifeguard tower.

Commissioners agreed to include a water-splash play area despite concerns about the estimated annual \$25,000 cost of maintenance.

"We get one chance to do this (oceanfront park)," said Commissioner Troy Kent, who added that the splash park at the South Ormond Recreation Center is "wildly successful."

"Rip currents, deadly sharks, jelly fish and man of war, there are many times when it's not appropriate for anyone to get in the water," he said. "Some people like the beach, they just don't like the water (ocean). They love a splash park."

The mayor wondered if a splash park would be too successful, but went along with adding the water feature.

"We will create a monster of people taking their kids there, dropping them off to use the splash park and not going in the ocean," Mr. Kelley said.

The concession area will be designed so a food vendor can keep meals warm or cold to serve to the public, but food could not be cooked in the concession.

Commissioner James Stowers said nearby restaurants might want to bring cooked food over to sell to what is expected to be a crowded park.

"That's a win, win," Mr. Stowers said. "We're supporting our local businesses."

However, there was an initial negative reaction about the potential of applications for food vendors being processed through Volusia County and then the money from vendors being given to the city.

Several city commissioners initially rebelled at the idea of county control of the concessions.

However, Ms. Shanahan, the city manager, said Volusia County would only be making available its process to coordinate applications from vendors. Ormond Beach vendors could still apply and the city would still get the vendor fees.

Mr. Kelley said the question of selecting a vendor would be another issue for another time. As for now, the architects have a clear set of preferences from the City Commission to finalize the park design, he said.

Voters last year approved a bond issue to pay \$1.5 million of the cost to buy the 4-acre oceanfront property at 839 S. Atlantic Ave. for a park. Volusia County chipped in \$3.5 million toward the \$5 million acquisition cost from its ECHO program, which pays for environmental, cultural, historic and outdoors programs from a voter-approved tax.

City commissioners named the park in honor of Mr. Romano, the city's first lifeguard and beach concessionaire, who has remained active through the years in leisure and recreation programs for Ormond Beach.